

TRAVEL WEEKLY

New things to do, places to stay in Puerto Vallarta

New projects and developments are ramping up in Puerto Vallarta as 2022 approaches and arrival numbers begin to creep back to pre-pandemic levels.

"We are very positive that the fall and winter season will be close to 2019 numbers," said Luis Antonio Villasenor, director of the Puerto Vallarta Tourism Board.

Puerto Vallarta is looking to target younger age demographics as well as families as it reemerges. "More than 80% of visitors are 55-plus, but during the pandemic we have gotten a lot of families. We're very positive about the following months. We keep adding products to the area to try to highlight more ecological tourism, wellness, pet-friendly and LGBT," as well, Villasenor said.

Promoting ecotourism

Socially responsible tourism has become a popular theme for destinations that reopened to tourism during the pandemic, and Puerto Vallarta is no exception.

One of the newer eco-adventure experiences/accommodations is Jorullo Paradise, which debuted in April. Located in the Sierra Madre mountains, Jorullo Paradise features 11 cabins, a farm-to-table restaurant, pool and nine hot springs for guests who are looking to experience something away from the beach and with sustainability in mind. Many of the property's activities are what it calls "low-impact": hiking, nature walks, wildlife viewing and a bicycle zipline.

"It has the longest zipline to cross on a bicycle, as well as hot springs," Villasenor said. "The company is trying to reforest the area, and it is a great place to experience the beauty of the mountains."

Down on the beach, a new ecolodge, El Jardin Yelapa, has opened in Yelapa, a small beach community with a string of laid-back beachfront bars on the southern tip of the Bay of Banderas. The new lodge features four palapa-style casitas, all of which are open-air and oceanview. It gets all of its water from a natural spring and provides purified water for drinking and also composts and recycles. For travelers who really want a private island-style experience that is nature-immersive and promotes disconnecting, this would be the place to book in Puerto Vallarta.

"Yelapa has a strong expat community and is very colorful," Villasenor said of the destination, which is only accessible via boat from PV. "It is very popular for that hippie-chic travel. You will keep seeing new things in the following year in that area."

Expanding the southern part of the Bay of Banderas has been a big goal during the pandemic. There are plans for a high-end beach club in a stretch of beach between Yelapa and Quimixto that will feature an ecofriendly marina, a mixology bar and plenty of places to relax, swim, and eat.

Puerto Vallarta has also established a network of companies that work to give back to the community. When travelers come to Puerto Vallarta and want to make donations to the families and individuals who were negatively impacted by the pandemic, they have a whole list to go through of who needs help and with what.

"The pandemic changed the way people travel," he added. "We get a lot of requests for social responsibility. We have a network of more than 20 associations that we can refer tourists to when they want to come and do something good for the city."

More projects on the horizon

Other new projects to keep an eye out for include the launch of Vidanta Cruises, Mexico's first luxury cruise line. The debut vessel, the Vidanta Elegant, will sail from Puerto Vallarta and call at Mazatlan and Los Cabos.

A Cirque du Soleil theme park is set to open in February. The original plan called for one park, but there will actually be three parks at the site: a Cirque du Soleil park, a waterpark and an adventure park similar to Six Flags.

"We had a great summer," said Villasenor. "We are expecting 60% hotel occupancy at the end of the year. We have a lot more product in much of the city and are a top-rated Airbnb destination."

He pointed out that 90% of hotel personnel in Puerto Vallarta have been vaccinated and that the destination still maintains its strict health and safety protocols, even as vaccination rates continue to rise.